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Women's Equality Day, 1988

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Sixty-eight years ago, on August 26, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, granting women the right to vote, was ratified. The anniversary of this milestone is a fitting time to celebrate this achievement and to pay tribute to those who resolutely sought to secure this most basic right. It is also an appropriate time to reflect on the advances women have continued to make over the past seven decades in political participation and other areas, playing indispensable roles and offering leadership in family life, the economy, intellectual and artistic activity, business, the professions, and government.

On this day of historic significance, Americans everywhere should pause to salute women for their contributions to our land. Many have won a place in history and in the way we define ourselves as a people—for instance, Pocahontas and Sacagawea; Dolley Madison and Molly Pitcher; Sojourner Truth and Rosa Parks; Nellie Bly and Sally Ride; Helen Hayes and Kate Smith; Clara Barton and Clare Boothe Luce. They and countless other women, some widely known and many more known simply in family, village, office, or neighborhood, have helped make us and keep us a country both great and good.

Women continue to achieve. For instance, women's economic strides in recent years have been notable. More than 55 million women are now in the labor force, and women hold 60 percent of the more than 17 million new jobs created since 1982. Since November 1982, employment of women is up 19 percent. Many women hold high-paying managerial and professional jobs; women's entry into top management has grown greatly since 1980. Women's real median income grew more than 15 percent between 1981 and 1986. Women are starting small businesses at twice the rate of men, and the gap in wages is steadily closing.

Women's roles continue to grow in other areas, too, such as public service. In this Administration, 1,308 women have achieved senior policy-level positions, and, at all levels of government, 3,039 women have accepted at least one Presidential appointment. In just the first term of this Administration, 37 women served as Presidential assistants. During this Administration, 32 women have received lifetime appointments to the Federal judiciary, and one of them serves as a Supreme Court Justice. Four of the ten female Cabinet members in our entire history have served in this Administration.

On this day, let us recount women's accomplishments and celebrate. But let us also reaffirm, individually and as communities and a Nation, our determination to seek a future of increasing economic freedom, prosperity, and equal opportunity in which all our citizens can fully and freely develop their talents and reach for their dreams for the good of others.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 1988, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirteenth.

Ronald Reagan